

Volunteers: essential information - 11

This series of information sheets guides you through the complex, but essential, information you need to have at your fingertips when you are recruiting and training volunteers to support sailing programmes which include disabled people.

Code of practice

A code of practice is an agreement between two parties – in this case the volunteer and the club management.

From the management point of view, while the involvement of volunteers is generally a positive experience for everyone involved, sometimes things can go wrong. You may find that a volunteer has a complaint about another volunteer, a member of staff or the organisation itself. Or you may find that a volunteer's performance has declined, or that someone else has complained about a volunteer's work, attitude or conduct.

Problem solving procedure

Having a problem solving procedure helps to create consistency, and demonstrates your organisation's commitment to volunteering good practice. While employees have grievance and disciplinary policies, volunteers are not covered by employment or equal opportunities legislation. In fact, volunteers only have the same legal rights as the general public, so your problem solving procedure will help to ensure that volunteers are treated fairly and are not discriminated against.

A problem solving procedure will ensure that you know how to deal with problems if they arise. It can help you to find the most appropriate solution to the problem, without necessarily resorting to dismissal. Such a policy is also useful for building a case for dismissal, where this is appropriate, so that this decision can be explained to members of the organisation as well as outsiders. It is good practice to avoid using the same grievance and disciplinary policy for both staff and volunteers, so the term 'problem solving procedures' helps to keep the two separate. The policy you write for volunteers needs to be written in clear language that is easy to understand.

All complaints should be resolved openly, fairly and quickly to:

- protect your volunteers
- minimise any disruption to your staff, service users and other volunteers
- demonstrate that your organisation respects its volunteers
- protect the reputation of your organisation

Follow this link for more information:

www.volunteering.org.uk/managingvolunteers/goodpracticebank/Information/Problem+solving+procedures.htm

Volunteer's code of practice

Your volunteers will also benefit from a written policy on how they are expected to behave. The following code of practice is an example you may wish to follow.

- Relax, be yourself and have fun.
- Treat everyone as unique – recognise that everyone is different.
- Be open to other ideas, religions and cultures.
- Recognise that the groups you are volunteering with are able to make their own decisions.
- Allow people to take reasonable risks and to make mistakes.
- Promote equal opportunities.
- Be prepared to work in pairs or groups especially if moving and handling or helping with care.
- Don't spend all your time in groups of volunteers – mingle.
- Offer feedback on the induction and training that you receive.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- If you are not happy with someone's decision, explain why and discuss it with a leader.
- Share your skills, interests and talents.
- If you are concerned about safety or another issue discuss this with the leaders.
- Remember you will be a role model; your behaviour is important.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Respect the feelings and dignity of the people with whom you are working.
- Make suggestions and contribute ideas.
- Don't talk about people as if they are not there.

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